

EXHIBIT I - DECLARATION 13



Kshama Sawant

DISTRICT 3 CENTRAL SEATTLE



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My letter to Rep. Pramila Jayapal: Support our fight to make Seattle the first city to ban caste discrimination

February 17, 2023

Dear Representative Jayapal,

I am writing to urge you to support legislation from my City Council office to ban caste discrimination in Seattle. The Seattle City Council is scheduled to vote Tuesday, February 21. If approved, it would be historic, making Seattle the first city in the nation to take this important step to fight caste oppression, and as far as I know, also the first city globally outside South Asia.

The legislation is already supported by over fifty community and labor organizations, including the Alphabet Workers Union ([AWU-CWA](#)), the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance ([APALA](#)) of the AFL-CIO, [API Chaya](#), Equality Labs, the Ambedkar International Center, the Coalition of Seattle Indian Americans, Hindus for Human Rights, the Indian American Muslim Council, and Socialist Alternative. The legislation also has the support of Noam Chomsky, Cornel West, and Arundhati Roy. **It also has the support of [Amnesty International](#) and the United Nations Special Rapporteur**

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on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance. Nearly 3,500 people have emailed City Councilmembers urging them to vote 'Yes', and more than 1,300 people have signed my office's petition.

Not surprisingly, the ordinance is being strenuously opposed by right-wing fundamentalists. These organizations, such as the Hindu American Foundation and the Coalition of Hindus of North America, have extremely right-wing agendas that have common ground with the reactionary regime in India of the Bharatiya Janata Party and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. **As Congressman and Chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, I hope that your office will stand with our movement against the right wing.** I have also written to Congressman Khanna. I hope both your offices will publicly support this ordinance. Please read the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) my office has prepared to help educate community members, which also offers fact-based responses to the right-wing talking points.

We know that, like racism and sexism, caste oppression is rooted in deeply divided class-based societies, in which the elite need to divide the majority in order to justify accumulating wealth for themselves by exploiting the masses.

And as you know, with the emigration of hundreds of thousands of South Asian people to the United States, caste oppression has followed. Caste discrimination is increasingly a grave contributor to workplace discrimination and bias across many industries, including technology, construction, restaurants and the service industry, and in domestic work. Data from [Equality Labs](#) show that one in four caste-oppressed people in the United States faced physical and verbal assault, one in three faced education discrimination, and two in three (sixty seven percent) faced workplace discrimination.

In response, community activists around the country have organized in the last few years to win campus-wide bans on caste discrimination at Cal State University, UC Davis, Harvard University, Colby College, and Brandeis University. Civil rights organizations like the [NAACP](#) and labor organizations including the Alphabet Workers Union and the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA) of the AFL-CIO have taken important stances against caste discrimination inside their own organizations. This legislation, if we win, will be the biggest step forward to date.

On Tuesday, we will need powerful voices in support of the ordinance, to counter the lies and false arguments of the right wing.

I urge you as an elected leader in Seattle and the United States Congress, and as a prominent South Asian community leader, to publicly support this fight by endorsing the ordinance and urging the City Council to vote YES to ban caste discrimination, without watering down or delays. I also urge you to join us this Tuesday, February 21 at 2:00 p.m. at City Hall to speak in public comment, and to mobilize your supporters to join us. **We are holding a rally at 12:00 p.m. Tuesday at City Hall, prior to the city council vote, and would be happy to invite you to speak.**

In solidarity,

Kshama Sawant

Seattle City Councilmember, District 3



Posted: February 17th, 2023 under [Uncategorized](#)

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